

Exhibit 40

RACHEL HODGES WALL

Redacted

April 20, 2016

The Honorable Thomas M. Durkin
Dirksen Court House
219 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Dear Judge Durkin:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on my friend and former employer, Speaker Dennis Hastert. It is with pleasure I share a few of my personal observations from my time as a congressional staff member for Speaker Hastert.

I first met Speaker Hastert, his wife Jean and sons Josh and Ethan on the day he was sworn in as Speaker of the House of Representatives, January 6, 1999. I previously served on the staff of Speaker Newt Gingrich and I recall feeling quite grateful that although he hadn't yet met me, Speaker Hastert was willing to take a chance on a young "staffer" from Tennessee, based on recommendation alone. Looking back, I realize it was my first experience with Denny's belief in the concept of "team". He implicitly trusted the team he had in place and if they thought I was alright, then I was alright! Little did I know that this wonderful feature of his personality would allow me unconditional support, as a young woman working in the highest office in the United States Congress.

For the next eight years I served as Speaker Hastert's Director of Special Events. I was responsible for planning all of the official events, ceremonies, official dinners, handling matters of protocol, you name it; that become part of the job when you're elected Speaker. Mind you, this was clearly not Speaker Hastert's favorite part of the new "gig". He was not a fan of attention and pomp and circumstance were laborious for such a reserved and private person. It was my job to make it appear that Denny had strong opinions concerning "all things ceremonial". It wasn't unusual for negotiations involving high-level dignitaries, heads of state, and congressional gold medal award recipients to become contentious. Everyone seemed to want the spotlight and sorting out who would get it was tricky at times. I recall a particularly contentious time while planning the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony honoring Rosa Parks. I was being pressured by numerous outside organizations and Members of Congress for requests ranging from additional tickets to the ceremony, to demands for speaking roles. I was eventually personally threatened during a morning radio show in Washington, DC. I was nervous for my personal safety and professional reputation, but mostly I feared that decisions I had made based on precedent, placed Speaker Hastert in a politically risky situation. When I explained the lengthy details to Speaker Hastert, he was unwavering. He never questioned my handling of each situation. I was a member of his team. And he trusted the team. His support granted me the much-needed "buck stops here"

authority that was essential for me to be successful in my position. I will always be grateful for his trust professionally.

After some time, I became more personally acquainted with Jean Hastert and I would often join her for events and official duties when she would visit Washington. I was selected, along with other key staff members, to travel and assist on official international trips led by the Hastert's and attended by Members of Congress and their spouses. These international delegations were among the highlight of my career as I was given the opportunity to get to know the Hastert's in a more personal setting.

During the course of the eight years I served on Denny's team, I found it was the small, nameless moments that revealed his true character. It was not unusual to be summoned to his office for "intel sessions" that included questions regarding items he might be considering purchasing for Jean for a special birthday or anniversary. "Do you think she might like a new jogging suit or a sporty watch because she has been working out more?" Once, following a Coast Guard Cutter being named for Jean, he purchased a small, gold anchor for her to wear as a reminder of the special day.

One rainy Sunday afternoon in December while the House was still in session, we set out together, with his security detail, for Tyson's Corner; the big mall in the suburbs. He had his heart set on getting her a diamond solitaire necklace. We trudged through the masses in our portly gaggle searching for the store of my choosing. He carefully selected a necklace for her, looked to me for a nod of approval, and we were on our way... via a quick browse through the fishing section of L.L. Bean!

I enjoyed observing his care for Jean over the years. His interest in making sure she knew that her special occasions were noted, in spite of his extremely demanding schedule, was nothing short of beautiful. I appreciated the way he would always turn back to make sure she was with him, as he lumbered down the hallway. He made sure that if Jean was in town, we'd get a nice group together for dinner out. He wanted her to be happy and enjoy herself. Many evenings following dinner, Jean would return to her hotel and the security detail would drive The Speaker and me back to Capitol Hill in the darkness. Occasionally we would chat about something funny from dinner or a topic of interest from the office but most often these were quiet rides. I remember at times almost *feeling* the weight of the responsibility he carried as we both stared into the distance in silence. Even a visit from Jean couldn't erase the heavy burden of the huge job he willingly and boldly faced every day. We might have stepped away for dinner but huge tasks were always waiting. We dropped him off first and I knew he was going in to collapse, sleep a little and then face it all bright and early the next day.

Looking back, those days in Washington, D.C. seem a million miles away. I'm now married, raising four children and sharpening my skills as an "armchair politician". I will always be grateful to have witnessed history and Speaker Hastert's leadership in real time. Events such as 9/11, the Bush recount, the Elian Gonzalez decision, the Terry Schiavo debate and the endless build of important legislation are among my "*legislative memories*". But those huge events pale when compared to my very special *personal* memories of Denny. He adored his family and treasured his friends. He allowed me tremendous responsibility at a very young age and I will always consider him the most treasured mentor of my career.

As a young professional in a city full of questionable characters, at no point did I witness inappropriate behavior by Speaker Hastert. It is still difficult for me to reconcile all that has happened during the last months. He revered the office in which he served, but never let the power affect his character. In truth, he was exactly the same on his last day as Speaker as he was on his very first.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I might be helpful in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Hodges Wall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first letter "R" is large and loops around the first part of the name. The last letter "Q" has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Rachel Hodges Wall